

Geo-Regional Security and Transformation After the Balkan's Wars and Kosova Independence

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Abstract

During the '90-ies the wars in the former territories of what was called Yugoslavia marked the end of a century plenty of wars and local armed conflicts. More than 140 million people died because of wars in the XX century. The war of Kosova was the last one in that century. The beginning of the XXI century stressed the necessity for a new way of thinking nationally, regionally and globally. The Balkans were often considered as a gun powder territory. All the Balkans states, someone more and someone less, have problems with each other. History was and remained very passionate within the Balkan countries. The case of Kosova is possibly the most sensitive in all this framework. After the proclamation of independence on February 17 2008, the concerns were high within the region and a new question was questioned: would the map of the Balkan peninsula change again to form another "Kosovo"? This article would give some details about the geopolitical situation in the Balkans focusing on Kosova and would try to establish e new way of making politics and diplomacy though deterrence and not offence. We will try to overpass history but without neglecting it, but by learning from its mistakes in order to bring a better Peace-Building aspect for the Balkan region.

Key Words: Balkans, Kosova, Albania, Serbia, Politics, Diplomacy, Geopolitics, Region, War, Peace

1. Introductions

In all its history, the Balkan peninsula has always faced internal or external resistance to allow its peoples to build an original state. Albanians, Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Croats, Slovenes, Romanians have had always difficulties to find the common language among them as a consequence of big intrusions from western and eastern empires. Not in few cases, the Balkans turned to become an arena where the interests of the big powers angrily collided causing a lot of damages to the Balkans. Inasmuch, the empires were establishing themselves in this peninsula, and as long as the invaders changed, also changed the system of governance of the Balkan countries. These continuous changes influenced too much in the economic and political life of the Balkan countries for not allowing them to build a system of their own as in the eastern and western countries.

The Orthodox Christian religion was powerfully imposed in the Balkans except in Slovenia, Croatia and in the north of Albania where Catholicism stood strong.¹ The beginnings of the Ottoman invasions on the middle of the XIV century until its complete conquest of the Balkans in the XV century brought to this territory after a long time "experiments" the establishment of a unique political and economic system lasting for 500 years.

During these 500 years, the Moslem religion would have not an equal diffusion in the Balkan countries. With exception of Bosnia Herzegovina and Albania where the convert in the religion of the empire was massive, the other Balkan countries wouldn't have a massive conversion. After the Congress of Berlin on 1878, the Balkan turned to be into a theater of rude rivalries between the countries composing it.² On 1881, Montenegro raised pretensions against Albanian territories, on 1885 Serbia against Bulgaria; on 1887 Greece against Ottoman Empire; on 1912 Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece united their forces against Turkey to divide among them what has remained from the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.³

¹ Boriçi, Gjon 'L'ex Yougoslavie entre la violence et la paix 1987-1999', (Tirana; GEER 2007), f. 7

² Ibid, f. 8

³ Ibid.

The explosion of the First World War on 1914 had as starting point the crime in Sarajevo of Bosnia Herzegovina (at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian empire annexed since 1908) where was killed the heir to the Austrian throne Franz Ferdinand. The System of Versailles following the First World War made such a mess in the Balkans. Were united those peoples who should have been divided and were divided those peoples that should have remained united. The great mistake of the Great Powers on 1919 in Versailles would take frightening dimensions in the '90-ies of the XX century demonstrating one again how harmful was the "reward" diplomacy for those countries who took territories never belonging to them. Serbia and Greece were the greatest winners in the Balkans, but if Greece was self restrained as a cause of her defeat in Turkey in 1923, Serbia established a state with the "blessing" of France from the Austrian border to the Greek border. At east and in the west was bordered from Bulgaria and Albania. This state, named Yugoslavia, Serbia achieved to preserve even during and after the Second World War to the fall of the Berlin wall. After, everything that happened, was a bloody conflict, which those peoples that were forced to unite in 1919, would endure a tragic split and with no compromise.

The communist legacy who existed till 1990, discovered the Byzantines intrigue of the new Balkan "emperors", their big lie of popular democracies and according to them, the keeping of the new "democratic" order and of "prosperity".⁴ In the '90-ies the Balkan countries had enormous problems and unmerciful bloodshed and the peoples who suffered the most were Romanians, Albanians, Croats, Bosnians and Serbs.

2. The Balkan and its geopolitical legacy

There is no place in the Balkan that one should not feel the weight of national minorities even why their numbers are small compared with the population of the country they are established. On 1992 the French journalist Paul Garde would write about the explosion of war in the former Yugoslavia:

⁴ Ibid, f. 11

"The conscience of a common fate, the will to live together, the whole feelings that compound the elements for a nation are the true foundation of its viability. All this never existed to that nation" [Yugoslavia].⁵

Internally of the Serb Republic, the autonomous provinces (Kosova and Vojvodina) were gaining little by little an equal status with other six republics (Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia). Serbia was very sensitive when the situation was moving in favor of Vojvodina and Kosova. Serbia considered them integral part of her, but if Serbia wanted to speak on behalf of Federation it had to be counseled with Kosova and Vojvodina. It looked like Serbia was depending on them because the Constitution of 1974 has given them an autonomous status.

The situation in Kosovo was becoming difficult. Albanians in Kosovo represented 90% of the population according to the census of 1991. Totally different were the other Balkan regions which were isolated from the Adriatic sea divided from the Croatian cordon, but in those time couldn't be given a clear consideration about the situation. Two were the communities which endangered the existence of Yugoslavia, Slavs and Albanians. In the middle of Slav populations (Serbs, Montenegrins, Bosnian and Macedonians) was living an Albanian population, ethnic and with a different religion from the Slavs. The Albanians never found themselves comfortable within the structure of Yugoslavia. In the Republic of Albania were living 3.3 million Albanians. In Kosovo 2 million of Albanians. In Macedonia 400 thousand, and in Montenegro 55 thousand. 100 thousands were the Albanians living in Greece and all these numbers turned the Albanians into a real threat for the Slav world within Yugoslavia.⁶

The terms "peace" and "stability" so much infringed during all the last ten years of the 90-ies, the face of war, massacres and chaos that was installed in endemic way in the region, formed a criminal net which let even the most attentive observers shocked and illusive if the Balkan would have a lasting stability between the ethnic groups after the war.⁷

As a consequence of the original geopolitical configuration, Yugoslavia a unique situation and the Balkans as a general one, have always practiced political games with states in Europe without understanding who would be

⁵ Garde, Paul 'Vie et mort de la Yougoslavie', (Paris; Fayard 1992), f. 134

⁶ Boriçi, Gjon 'L'ex Yougoslavie entre la violence et la paix 1987-1999', (Tirana; GEER 2007), f. 20

⁷ Prevalakis, George 'Les Balkans, cultures et géopolitique' (Atene 1994), f. 3

in charge in the continent. Two are the cases that misled the Balkans existence since the times of the Roman empire to her Danube borders. The physical situation of the continental ground changed from the Mediterranean one, but always one power has always managed the region. This fact was drawing the conclusion that the inhabitants were part of a single region with characteristic distinctions about nationalities. The local identities were very strong. The action of the great powers could have been multi dimensional, but never succeeded to soft the internal and local conflicts as a consequence of a very complex ethnic and religious diversity to serve as an amplificatory tool for their regional strategies.⁸

With the end of the Cold War, the Balkan problems have been a new destabilizing factor for Europe. The crises of Yugoslavia sought to be anxious, revanchist, with national contractions. Also, the Yugoslav crises brought to surface the weakness of the western countries to give proper solutions for the crises and presented the absence of geopolitical balances making them dependable from the resistance of a single superpower. These elements was added the lost of political orientations and the diffusion of new doctrines that were very contradictory as for example "the end of history".⁹

In July 1991, the war exploded in the former Yugoslavia. It started instantly after the reunification of Germany, conclusion of the Gulf war and just before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Many have been the stories written and analyses that have been made to understand the causes of war in Yugoslavia, but one thing is certain, it had devastating effects in all the Balkans including Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria.¹⁰

3. New Balkan geopolitics and the identity of Kosova

From all the experts of geopolitics is well-known the fact that exist four big geopolitical schools; the German school of geopolitics which supports the continental power; Anglo-Saxon geopolitical school supporting the sea power; French geopolitical school supporting realism and human geography; Russian geopolitical school supporting pan-Slavism.¹¹

⁸ Boriçi, Gjon 'L'ex Yougoslavie entre la violence et la paix 1987-1999', (Tirana; GEER 2007), f. 25

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, f. 26

¹¹ Chauprade Aymeric 'Géopolitique; constantes et changements dans l'histoire', (Paris; Ellipses 2007), f. 29

In this essay we will mostly focus at the Russian school of geopolitics because she had a lot of influence to the Serb people in the Balkan harming the Albanian people. Pan-Slavism was established as a doctrine in the XIX century by a famous Russian general called Ignatiev as a reference for the Russian tsars to enforce the Russian doctrine of advance from East to West. In this effort, the neighboring countries, especially the Slav ones, have had strong support from Russia, which at those times was practicing a very active policy to change the Balkan in a space controlled by her in order to impose its hegemony.¹² In this aspect, in the beginning Bulgaria and then Serbia would turn to be the "canoodles" of the Russian policies. Such a position Serbia will keep until the end of the 80-ies with some up and downs. The self-determination principle which entered into the political arena with the System of Versailles, was harshly collided in the beginning of 2000 when the Albanian of Kosova were seeking political independence and Serbia was opposing it. Serbia continues to be influenced by the Russian school of geopolitics reasoning that the self-determination was acceptable when it was social, but totally unacceptable when it became ethnic or national.¹³

Kosova proclaimed its independence on February 17 2008, nine years after her liberation from the Serbian centennial invaders. They were not so eager to give up Kosova because they call her "the cradle of Serbia" and began a massive international campaign culminated with the trial in the International Court of Justice to cancel the independence of Kosova. After months of hearings of legal experts, in July 2010, the International Court of Justice decided that the Independence of Kosova was valuable.

Another aspect which the Serbs oppose the independence of Kosova are the place-names (toponyms). The word toponym comes from the Greek that means place. According to this definition typology is the reasoning of the place. Since 200 years ago Serbs have been trying to transform the place-names in Kosova presenting them as Serbs and not at all Albanian. The desire to undo everything that is Albanian and to present it as Serb brought the Serbian politics continues errors. According to the British scholar Noel Malcolm it is a little unclear that how and why Kosova has

¹² Murzaku, Thoma 'Çështja shqiptare në vështrim të politikës ruse (fundi i shek. XIX - fillimi i shek. XX) referat në konferencën shkencore "Shqipëria në kuadrin e sfidave globale të sigurisë" (Ufo University Press; Tiranë 29 prill 2011), f. 23

¹³ Chauvade Aymeric 'Géopolitique; constantes et changements dans l'histoire', (Paris; Ellipses 2007), f. 81

been the name of this territory when has never been used as a territorial name during the Great Serb medieval Kingdom, while for the first time is seen in the writings for the great Battle of 1389, that has been developed in the Kosova Field.¹⁴

In north and north-west of Kosova, is found the historic territory of Rashka, the original centre of the Serb medieval state. (City of Rashka is found some kilometers away from Novi Bazaar). The Serb central territory in the north of Kosova, remains from every point of view the heart of the Serbian soil.¹⁵ The battle of Kosova Field on June 28 1389 in the Serb historiography is described as the big fall of Serbia. Was exactly this date that according to them brought Albanians in this region. In the official calendar of the Serb Orthodox Church, the Vidovdan Day (Saint Vitus) was dedicated to the prophet Amos, Old Testament, thus only in the XIX century, Saint Vitus begun to figure in the calendar. The whole idea of national and religious celebration of this day, is in fact a creation of XIX century.¹⁶

The dissolution of Yugoslavia turned Serbia into an enclave. Historically, the passage of Serbia to the Adriatic sea through the Dalmatian seashore was made passing through Croatia and Bosnia. Since 1999 and the war in Kosova, Serbia to passage to the Adriatic sea was dependent from her Montenegrin port but now Serbia has withdrawn north of Kosova.¹⁷ The independence of Montenegro on 2006 exacerbated the position of Serbia. Now, Serbia is a country totally surrounded and with no naval marine.¹⁸

According to Kosova, the Serb theses continues with stubborn to be that territory is integral part of Serb Medieval Kingdom.¹⁹ The Albanian hood came lately in the XVII century. According to this theses all Albanians of Kosova have come from Albania.²⁰

In front of the Serb theses, stands the Albanian theses which was forged in the XIX century with the help of Austrian historians which supported

¹⁴ Malcolm, Noel 'Kosova; një histori e shkurtër' (Prishtinë; Koha 2011), f. 37

¹⁵ Ibid, f. 42

¹⁶ Ibid, f. 125

¹⁷ Confédération paneuropéenne, Les Balkans, La Guerre du Kosovo, actes du colloque du 29 novembre 1999, Sénat, Paris, L'Âge d'Homme, 2000

¹⁸ Chauprade Aymeric 'Géopolitique; constantes et changements dans l'histoire', (Paris; Ellipses 2007), f. 121

¹⁹ A. et J Sellier, 'Atlas des peuples d'Europe centrale', (Paris; La Decouverte 1998), f. 164

²⁰ Thual, F. 'Le désir de territoire', (Paris; Ellipses 1999), f. 22

the theses that since antiquity and until the VII century (the Serbs came into the Balkans in this century) Kosova has been inhabited from Illyrian population and the Albanians of Kosova are with Illyrian origin and consequently Albanian.²¹

4. The reality of Kosova independence; threat or security consolidation?

Kosova proclaimed its independence on February 17 2008 after facing many years of Serb repression. After long and harsh Balkan wars of the '90-ies, the world diplomacy was thinking one thing; Balkan security. Except ethnic divisions, not a small role was playing the religious differences between Croats and Serbs, Moslem, Catholic and Orthodox Bosnian, Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs, Slavs Macedonian and Albanians.²² But indeed, the religion was not so much problematic that was the ethnic hatred among the inhabitants themselves. Living together was the most challenging challenge for the Balkan peoples. Kosova was a unique case in this challenge. The deep disagreements between Albanians and Serbs existed from 150 years. Not enough was for Serbia to establish the "Nacertanija" doctrine putting in firsthand the annihilation of Albanians. Now the challenge to face is; could Serb and Albanians live in peace and harmony together, in a sovereign territory without a foreigner military presence? Until now it seems that is a longing desire but still no light in the end of the tunnel. In fact, Albanians have shown that know to live in a common state with the Slavs and even to establish common policies. The case which proves this is Macedonia. On 2001, these two ethnic groups clashed militarily, but still made the historic compromise with the Ohrid Agreement framework.²³

As distinction from the Serbs, for Albanians the establishment of the state has not as bases the religion but the language. This because Albanians are multi-confessional - Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic.²⁴ The new state of

²¹ Chauprade, Aymeric 'Géopolitique; constantes et changements dans l'histoire', (Paris; Ellipses 2007), f. 247

²² Buzan, Barry & Waeber, Ole 'Regions and powers; the structure of international security', (Cambridge University Press 2003), f. 384

²³ Ibid, f. 385

²⁴ Clayer, Nathalie 'Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar; lindja e një kombi mysliman në Evropë', (Tiranë; Përpjekja 2012), f. 11

Kosova proved this the best. The tolerance that have shown the Albanian authorities towards the ethnic minorities, especially the Serb ones, is more than necessary to show to the international public opinion that the Albanians of Kosova are ready to build a state which guarantees to everybody the life and freedom and nobody should be persecuted regardless of ethnicity it belongs.

5. Conclusion

The establishment of the state of Kosova on 2008, as the formation of the Albanian one on 1912 and in the beginning of 2013, in the context of Ottoman and Serb defeats in the Balkan carries some dimensions: international, national, regional and individual.²⁵ Internationally, Kosova is a node that connects some Balkans states; nationally, justice was done after 95 years. Regionally and individually, Albanians are a people divided in five countries in the Balkan Peninsula (Montenegro, Kosova, Serbia, Macedonia and Greece). Was proved that without a rightful solution of the Albanian question in the Balkan, this peninsula would never find the desired peace and to remove the nickname "gunpowder". Was talked a lot about the insecurity that would pass this peninsula if Kosova would proclaim her independence. Apart some provocations, in the checkpoint border lines Kosova/Serbia nothing else occurred. The independence of Kosova produced stability and was recognized from the most powerful countries of the world, also with big political and diplomatic experience. Also, the day of Kosova integration into Euro-Atlantic structures will not be far. We thing that it is time that the Balkan countries live and think as Europeans and not as medieval kings. Cooperation is the only tool to achieve this goal.

²⁵ Ibid, f. 634

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